

OIKOUMENE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSION FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY, NY
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1 SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

*OIKOUMENE IS GREEK FOR "HOUSE" "FAMILY" "PEOPLE" "NATION" "OPEN TO OR PARTICIPATING IN THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD" AND IS THE SOURCE OF OUR WORD "ECUMENICAL," BUT HAS A BROADER SENSE. [PER ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA]

"From the Desk of the Director"

First Day of the Church Year in Eastern Churches

CONGRATULATIONS to our Bishop on his appointment as a consultor to the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews! In the words of the President of the local Jewish Federation of NENY:

"*Mazel tov* to the Most Rev. Edward Scharfenberger...on his appointment by Pope Francis as consultor to the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. 'Our' Bishop was the only U.S. consultor appointed to the Commission.

I often brag about our local interfaith relations. We break bread, stand in solidarity, and discuss difficult topics together. We certainly don't always agree, but we always dialogue respectfully. I've suggested that we are a model community, and I've anecdotally shared that the Vatican has referred to the Jewish/Catholic Dialogue of Albany to be the 2nd best in the U.S....When the Vatican pronounced back in 2016 that God had never rescinded His covenant with the Jewish people....I invited the Bishop to address our community with the news. He appreciated the invitation and was a gracious speaker. We should be so proud to have 'our' bishop on this Commission." -Rob Kovach

Note: The "2nd best" was a comment made by Cardinal Cassidy, then the head of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, when he lectured at the CSR; #1 was kept as a diplomatic secret!

"Halleluia!" The proposed Holocaust Memorial on land adjacent to M.H.R. Cemetery to be donated by our bishop has been approved by the town Board of Niskayuna; fund-raising to follow.

There has been ecumenical/interfaith interest and dialogue surrounding the "St. John's Bible" – 1st illuminated, handwritten (Benedictine-commissioned) Bible in more than 500 years – a copy from Siena College – on loan to St. Peter's Hospital.

"As...churches decline in attendance and baptisms, is there a need to communicate Christ in a different way? As the world becomes more anti-Christ, is there a new need to restructure discipleship efforts and concentrate more energy on prayer and Scripture? Should churches develop evangelism teams and send them out for short stints into unevangelized areas? Is the day approaching when believers in Jesus Christ will be required to shape their faith to government standards or endure persecution? If so, will that persecution incorporate incarceration, interrogation, and possibly martyrdom?

These questions are the reality of the world in which all believers live and this makes Bonhoeffer a stalwart example of study and emulation." -Dr. Michael Haggard (Director of NE...Baptist Theological Seminary, Schenectady) -Pastors Against Hitler

"In an era when Islamophobia is on the rise, it seems especially important for Catholic Christians to know that in addition to sharing our belief in the one God, Muslims also share a reverence for Mary....The Qur'an calls her an example for believers, a woman of truth, a sign for all peoples and chosen above all women....In Lebanon, a Muslim-majority country with a significant Christian (Maronite) minority, March 25 (the feast of the Annunciation) has been declared a national holiday. The idea originated with a Muslim, who also

created the day's motto, 'Together around Mary, Our Lady....' If Muslims & Christians in Lebanon can come together around 'Mary, Our Lady,' why can't we?" -Blasé Cardinal Cupich -America (5/27/19)

F.Y.I. "The Muslim community of Troy & Latham & the Muslim community in the capital district would like to express their condolences to the families and communities of the victims of the recent attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. We are very sad and very angry at these horrible acts against innocent people. We pray for the victims. We pray for their families and communities, and we pray for the world to have true peace."

Dr. Mohammed Abdulkarim Al-Issa, secretary general of the Muslim World League, and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, senior rabbi at NYC's Park East Synagogue, signed a joint call "to avoid, abandon and condemn hate speech of any kind, bearing in mind that children are not born with fear or hatred, but can be taught to fear & hate."

"People should not have to risk their lives when going to pray in churches, mosques, synagogues or temples. We call on all peoples, nations and their religious & political leaders to work for the protection of all religious sites as places essential to our common humanity and the preservation of faiths & cultures."

"...you cannot have Abraham's God without Abraham's children. Reject the latter and you lose the former. In its rejection of Marcionism (Viz., the Old Testament/Jews are obsolete, outdated, with Christ's coming), the Church staked a claim to this principle: the only God with whom it would have to do was the Jewish God, the God of Moses, Hannah, Mary, and Jesus. But the Church's consistency in maintaining this principle is uneven at best." -Brad East - Commonweal (2/22/19)

20 years ago Pope St. John Paul II made history by becoming the 1st pope to visit a predominately Orthodox country since the schism of 1054 – Romania. Pope Francis repeated that outreach this past May, with the theme: "Journeying Together." He said both Orthodox & Catholic Churches must not hold onto the memories of "wrongs endured and inflicted, of judgments & prejudices that enclose us in a vicious circle and bring only bareness." He called for us to be "cultivators of communion," to be "tireless in sowing seeds of unity....without suspicion or reserve, without pressuring or demanding uniformity, in the fraternal joy of a reconciled diversity."

"Whatever differences on points of doctrine may exist amongst the different denominations of Christians, all should be united in the bonds of charity, all should pray for one another, and should be willing to assist one another." -Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzins – "Apostle of the Alleghenies" (1840)

"What we are called to do as believers is to commit ourselves to the equal dignity of all, in the name of the Merciful One, who created us." -Pope Francis

"The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, race, language are willed by God in his wisdom, through which he created human beings." -Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb (grand imam of Egypt's al-Azhar mosque & university).

7,000 Muslims attended the papal Mass in the United Emirates, in which Pope Francis called for peace and unity (2/4/19).

CATHOLICS AND ORTHODOX: ARE WE SO DIVIDED?

"...Usually we underline those things that separate us from our Orthodox brothers & sisters, so much indeed that we have often forgotten the things that unite us: One and the same God...Christ...Mother of God...the same 7 sacraments...the same sacred Scriptures...the Apostles together with Holy Tradition...the first Ecumenical Councils which defined the Creed. That is, Orthodox & Catholics have in common these things which constitute the substance of Christianity. Through Baptism we do not become 'Catholics' or 'Orthodox', but Christians."

“The main issue that separates the 2 Christian confessions is the ‘Primacy of the Pope.’ Other differences, such as the way Holy Communion is communicated, the outward difference of the sign of the cross, the way the sacraments are celebrated, the celibacy of the clergy, the difference in the liturgical calendar, Etc., do not threaten the unity, but rather they express the spiritual richness, the pluralism and freedom of Christians.”

“Thus, if Christians were once alienated without them realizing it, a day will surely come when we will look each other eye-to-eye and they will find themselves to be brothers & sisters again.” -St. George’s R.C. Cathedral, Syros, Greece

“A baptismally-based ecclesiology grounds the principle and practice of conciliarity as ‘signifying that each member of the Body of Christ by virtue of baptism, has his or her place and proper responsibility in Eucharistic *koinonia* (*communio* in Latin).’ As a result of baptism and chrismation (confirmation), the whole Church makes up the royal priesthood, shares in the prophetic mission of Christ in the world, works to realize the justice & peace of the kingdom in the wider human community, and yearns to express this vocation in the structured unity of Eucharistic celebration. An emphasis on the whole people of God, as the foundation for how we conceive of the Church, suggests that any attempt to divide the body of Christ leads ultimately to expressing the Christian faith, too, on contrasting and negative categories. Our focus in thinking about the Church, and in celebrating its reality, must be on the unity of the people of God that is grounded in our common baptism, and on a corresponding understanding of the diversity of roles and charisms within that radically unified people.” -The Vocation & Mission of the People of God (U.S. Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation–5/19)

Common Statement: Mar Gewargis III (Catholicus/Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East) & Pope Francis:

7. Finally, we reaffirm that the more difficult the situation, the more necessary is interreligious dialogue grounded in an attitude of openness, truth, and love. Such dialogue is also the best antidote to extremism, which is a threat to every religion. (11/9/18)

“No one religion or denomination has the full and whole truth. God is both infinite and ineffable. For this reason, by definition, God cannot be captured adequately in human concepts and human language. Thus, while our knowledge of God may be true, it is always only partial. God can be truly known, but God cannot be adequately thought.”

-Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

“Hope means that what is need not be. We live in the light of that which is to come. We sense the vision of what God intends for creation and cannot leave things as they are. God intends for creation and people’s ‘shalom’: health, wholeness, salvation, and redemption for all....Hope emerges from the despair and the places of suffering, from unexpected people & places. We are hopeful because we are a caring community....”

Rev. Phil Grigsby (SiCM) –Living Hope

“The iconic clash between the Prophet Moses...and Pharaoh of ancient Egypt...known as the Exodus story, is a divine salvation narrative shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, who make up almost ½ of the world’s 7.5 billion people.... There are at least 3 powerful themes in this story....:

First, there is the ‘speaking truth to power’ motif that calls upon the faithful to critique contemporary political structures using divinely inspired principles, such as the work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr....

Second, the Exodus story is about the vindication of the oppressed. That is, no matter how tough times get for the people of God, they will ultimately be the recipients of God’s mercy....”

Finally, the Exodus story embodied in the Jewish, Christian, & Muslim faith traditions is a story of hope....”

-Prof. Jimmy Jones (Manhattanville College; Board Chair, Islamic Seminary of America) Living Hope

“The II Vatican Council also made it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to invite other Christians to join in dialogue about differences and so gradually to bring about an approach towards unity within the Christian Church. In a way Newman was the symbol of such a proposition. He knew dearly two Churches [Anglican/R.C.], and in his time was a leader of both. Opposed to extremes, he served, and his ideas still serve, as a bridge towards the understanding of them both.” -John Henry Newman –Brian Martin: as Cardinal Newman is canonized on October 13th.

Fr. Jim Kane

Opportunities for Enrichment

Sacred Texts Through the Eyes of the Abrahamic Religions: St. John’s Bible – Tanach (Torah) – Koran – Meaning and Message, September 11, 7-8:30 p.m., Mercy Auditorium, 310 South Manning Blvd. Albany. Spiritual Care Department at St. Peter’s Hospital Albany, in conjunction with Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York and Assalam Mosque, invites you to an evening of study and sharing. Presenters: Father James Kane, Rabbi Linda Motzkin (Temple Sinai), and Imam Abdulkadr Elmi. RSVP to Beatriz Martinez @ 518-535-1602.

Interfaith Story Circle – Endings and Beginnings, September 12, 7-9 p.m., First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, NY.

Movie Screening, Panel Discussion, Wellness Fair, September 24, 6-9:30 p.m., Sidney Albert Albany Jewish Community Center, 340 Whitehall Road, Albany, NY; Panelists will include: writer, director, and star, **Albert Dabah**, **Rabbi Deborah S. Gordon** Congregation Berith Sholom, and **Father Thomas E. Konopka, LCSW** The Consultation center, Roman Catholic Diocese Albany, along with a wellness fair. Refreshments will be served. visit www.NAMINYS.org

Family Promise, September 29, 9:45 a.m., St. Vincent DePaul Church, 900 Madison Ave, Albany, NY; For the past year, parishioners have been providing direct support for homeless families as they seek new direction and permanent shelter. We provide shelter, meals and caring support over the course of a week for four weeks each year. Come to a presentation about Family Promise to learn about the program and see how you can help. Contact David Rowell @ daverowell52@gmail.com

OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Tel. (518) 453-6660, Fax (518) 453-6793

email: ecumenical@rcda.org

DIRECTOR: Rev. Fr. James Kane

SECRETARY: Lisa Petrocelli

DIOCESAN COMMISSION:

CHAIRPERSON— Mr. Edward L. Falterman

Mr. David Amico—Liaison, Office of Lay Ministry & Parish Faith Formation

Deacon Walter Ayres—Liaison, Peace & Justice Commission

Mr. Peter Crasto-Donnelly

Mrs. Kathleen Kerrigan Duff—Liaison to Jewish-Catholic Dialogue

The Rev. Donna Elia—Protestant Observer

Mrs. Audrey Hughes—Muslim-Catholic Dialogue

Mrs. Joan Lipscomb

Rev. Fr. Joe Manerowski

Rev. Fr. David Mickiewicz—Liaison to Orthodox Dialogue

Mr. Frank Pell— “Our Neighbors’ Faith”

Ms. Ann Snyder

Sr. Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ

Mrs. Lynn Waterman

Oikoumene is Greek for “house” “family” “people” “nation” “open to or participating in the whole inhabited world” and is the source of our word “Ecumenical,” but has a broader sense. [per Encyclopaedia Britannica]

If you would like to receive copies of this publication by email or would like to sign up for your own snail mail subscription please contact the Commission: ecumenical@rcda.org or 518.453.6660. We are also online—www.rcda.org/offices/ecumenical_and_interreligious/oikoumene.html

